

Bibliographical Essay from 101 Myths of the Bible

The suggested reference works that follow are intended for the casual reader who wants to further explore some of the issues and ideas raised in this book. Most of the items mentioned should be available in book stores or good libraries.

The best general reference on the Documentary Hypothesis is Richard Elliot Friedman's [*Who Wrote the Bible?*](#) (Summit Books), which goes into the history and evolution of the J, E, P and D sources and shows how they influenced the writing of the first five books of the bible. The appendix has a useful chart that separates the biblical verses by source and also includes a bibliography of major scholarly works on biblical history. The same author has also recently published [*The Hidden Book in the Bible*](#) (Harper San Francisco), which extracts the J text out of the Torah and presents it as a continuous narrative. He also traces what he believes to be the J source through several other books of the bible. Although this extended view of J has not yet received general acceptance among scholars, Friedman is a highly respected scholar in the field of source criticism and his views carry some weight. [UPDATE: Since publishing this essay Friedman has released [*The Bible with Sources Revealed*](#), which provides a biblical translation of the first five books of the bible, with visual guides separating out the sources for easier examination.]

There are also numerous scholarly commentaries on each book of the bible and several of the commentaries discuss the role of the J, E, P and D sources on the first five books. One of the better reference works in this area is the [*Anchor Bible*](#), which consists of a separate volume for each book of the bible, with translation and commentary by a leading scholar on the volume in question.

Bible dictionaries provide a good way to get fast information on a particular person or topic. One of the best is the seven volume [*Anchor Bible Dictionary*](#), which contains many scholarly commentaries by leading experts in biblical studies. Released only a few years ago, it not only contains some of the latest information on archaeological sites in the Near East but in many areas of study summarizes the competing views of several scholars on a particular topic. It also has the advantage of being separately released on [CD-Rom](#).

Other useful bible dictionaries include the [*Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*](#), edited by Paul C. Achtemeier in conjunction with the Society of Biblical Literature, one of the leading organizations for biblical scholars, and the [*Harper's Bible Dictionary*](#) edited by Madeleine S. and J. Lane Miller.

The cybernetic age has ushered in several computerized bible study packages, offering side-by-side multiple translations and the option to instantaneously search for all verses containing particular words or phrases. In addition, many of these bible study packages offer integrated reference works, including Strong's word concordance, Hebrew and Greek dictionaries with definitions, bible dictionaries and a bible Atlas. One particularly helpful package is *QuickVerse* from Parsons Technology, usually available in any well-stocked software store. [UPDATE: Since writing this essay Logos has introduced significantly powerful bible software known as [*Scholars Library Series X*](#), which includes an enormous electronic library of searchable books as

well as a massive number of optional add-ons. Less expensive Logos options also exist. Highly recommended.]

For the study of Near Eastern mythology, a good general introductory work is [*Mythologies of the Ancient World*](#) (Anchor, Doubleday), edited and with an introduction by Samuel Noah Kramer, a leading expert in Near Eastern texts. Each region is assigned to a particular expert and the writer provides an overview and analysis of the relevant myths. Kramer, himself, did the section on Sumer and Akkad.

There are also several beautifully illustrated general mythological encyclopedias that do the same thing. Among them are [*Mythology: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*](#) (Rizzoli), edited by Richard Cavendish; the [*New LaRousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*](#) (Putnam), [*Egyptian Mythology*](#) (Paul Hamlyn) and [*Near Eastern Mythology*](#) (Hamlyn) by John Gray.

For those who prefer to read the ancient texts rather than a summary, the chief reference work is [*Ancient Near Texts Relating to the Old Testament*](#) (Princeton), edited by James B. Pritchard. It is a mammoth collection of ancient Near Eastern documents from several nations and contains modest introductions to the material. He also produced a companion volume called [*The Ancient Near East in Pictures*](#) (Princeton). It is unlikely you will find the complete version of either book outside of a library, but there is a heavily abridged version in two paperback volumes that can be obtained in book stores.

For a translation of Babylonian Creation and Flood myths, you might want to read two works by Alexander Heidel, [*The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*](#) (University of Chicago Press) and [*The Babylonian Genesis*](#) (University of Chicago Press). For a good look at some Egyptian Creation texts, see [*Genesis in Egypt*](#) (James P. Allen) in the Yale Egyptological Studies series. The only substantial text setting forth Egypt's Osiris mythological cycle is provided by the classical writer Plutarch, in his [*Isis and Osiris*](#). It is usually summarized in most texts about Egyptian myths but the Loeb Classical Library has the complete text in both English and Greek in Volume 5 of their edition of Plutarch's [*Moralia*](#). There are also several collections of ancient Egyptian literature that provide a translation of *The Contendings of Horus and Set*, including [*The Literature of Ancient Egypt*](#) (Yale University Press) edited by William Kelly Simpson and [*Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol II*](#) (University of California Press) by Miriam Lichtheim. [Update: You might also want to look at [Vol I](#) and [Vol III](#). Each volume covers a different era in Egyptian history.]

Several classical historians have written about ancient Egypt, including [Herodotus](#), [Diodorus Siculus](#), [Plutarch](#) and [Josephus](#) (in his *Antiquities*.) For a modern general history of Egypt, Sir Alan Gardiner's *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford University Press), written in 1961, has become somewhat of a classic and more recently *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Blackwell) by Nicolas Grimal, published in 1994, provides an updated overview.

For a general survey of Mesopotamia, a good starting point would be [*Sumer and the Sumerians*](#) (Cambridge University Press) by Harriet Crawford and [*Babylon*](#) (Thames and Hudson) by Joan Oates. Also see the beautifully illustrated [*Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East*](#) (Facts on File) by Michael Roaf.

For an overview of other areas of the Near East you might want to look at [*The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean*](#) (Thames and Hudson) by N. K. Sandars; [*The Secret of the Hittites*](#) (Schocken Books) by C. W. Ceram; [*Ugarit and the Old Testament*](#) (Erdmans) by Peter C. Craigie; and [*The Phoenicians; The Purple Empire of the Ancient World*](#) (William Morrow) by Gerhard Herm.

For a detailed scholarly analysis of the ancient Near East, there is probably no better source than the multi-volume [*Cambridge Ancient History*](#). Each volume covers a particular time frame and covers the politics, culture, religion and history of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Canaan, Syria, Greece and Anatolia (approximately ancient Turkey.)

Finally, for a challenge to traditional views about the origins of biblical civilization, I recommend my own [*The Moses Mystery*](#) (Birch Lane Press), reprinted as *The Bible Myth* (Citadel). It opposes the biblical idea that Israel evolved over many centuries out of a nomadic Semitic culture in Mesopotamia and Canaan. Instead, I argue that Israelites emerged suddenly in fourteenth century BC Egypt, as followers of the religious monotheism of Pharaoh Akhenaten and they left Egypt in the violent aftermath of the counter-revolution. The book also compares the bible's Patriarchal history with Egyptian mythological cycles and shows the parallels between the two.